

FURTHER AFIELD NO. 2045

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1888,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set you to be a light of the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”

Acts 13:46-48.

DEAR friends, last Sabbath morning I tried to stir you up to sacred activity. I heard from many that they felt thoroughly motivated, and I know of some who at once commenced to speak for Christ. I wish I could hope that our whole company kept step together in this. If what is said on the Sabbath were really carried out, what splendid advances we should make! But if not, it is as though a commanding officer spoke to his troop, and the men did not march according to orders. However, I am thankful for what was done, and for the many of you who did keep step together in an earnest march to conquer the powers of sin by making known the gospel of Jesus Christ. “They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word,” and I hope that you, as you scattered to your various abodes, did go everywhere teaching the word of God according to your capacity. If so, you have already come far enough to have met with individuals upon whom your warnings and invitations have been spent in vain. I thought it would be well for us this morning to go with Paul to Antioch, in Pisidia, and just see how he was treated there, and what he did when he met with an ill reception from the Jews, that we might not be discouraged if our message has been refused, but that we might be instructed by the example of Paul and Barnabas as to what we should do, and be comforted by the success which their perseverance achieved.

The Jews of Antioch, after having heard Paul with considerable attention, made up their minds to refuse Jesus, the Son of David, and not to accept Him as their Messiah and Savior.

I. Our first point for consideration will be that **THE REJECTION OF CHRIST IS A VERY SOLEMN BUSINESS.** It has been a very solemn business for the Jewish nation. The history of the Jews since their rejection of our Lord may be written in blood and tears. No Gentile should read it without ten thousand blushes, for they have been evilly treated by all the nations, though through them the greatest blessing that ever came to men has come to us. Never should we forget that our Redeemer is of the seed of Israel. Yet, when the chosen people rejected Jesus deliberately, from that day a history of woe and sorrow began, which has gone on even to this day. To the deep disgrace of Christendom, so called, there still remain countries in which they regard a Jew's life as of less value than that of a dog, and only force holds them back from massacre. They are still a people scattered and removed in many parts of the earth, although in others they take the lead in wealth. Oh, that they had received the Messiah! I shall not attempt to picture what would have been their history if they had accepted the Son of David as their Lord. It is not so—

*“Oh, would our God to Zion turn!
God with salvation clad,
Then Judah's harp should music learn,
And Israel be glad.”*

I am bound to talk about a people nearer home, about some here present, who have refused the Savior. Perhaps they will say, at the very outset, “We have not done so, we will receive Him one day.” Yes, but you refuse Him *now*. If you do not now believe in Him, you have up till now rejected Him.

This you have done as they did at Antioch, *against the evidence of honest men.* They doubted whether Christ had really risen from the dead, although His resurrection was attested by hundreds of true

witnesses. His rising from the dead was a great miracle, but if He did not rise from the dead we have a far greater wonder to account for. Why did these hundreds of persons declare themselves to be eyewitnesses of His rising? Those who declared that they had seen Him alive after His crucifixion, how came they to agree in such a statement, and to persist in it so unanimously? They were simple folk, who had associated with Jesus for years, and they identified Him, after His rising, as the same person who died. They were not ingenious enough to have invented such a story. They could have no objective in spreading the statement if they had not believed it, for they suffered for it. They were not gainers in any form, except as to spiritual things. They were thrust into prison, and scourged, and banished, and most of them were slain for bearing this witness. Some of them died by deaths too cruel to be described, but they none of them ever recanted, or admitted that they might be mistaken. Hundreds of witnesses asserted that this Jesus, whom they saw dead upon the cross, did really rise again, and their belief of this fact filled them with a burning enthusiasm, which, while it produced in them a holy character, also caused them to speak with a marvelous boldness and full assurance which amazed their adversaries. They spoke earnestly, like men who felt that it was their life's work to bear witness to a divine fact. But the unbelievers set aside the testimony of these honest men. My unconverted hearer, if you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the work which was crowned by His rising from the dead, you set aside the witness of apostles, saints, and martyrs. The number of martyrs has been very great from that day till now, but you set aside the testimony borne by their lives and death. You also impute foolishness or deceit to your dearest friends, some of whom are with God, and who died in the faith, exhorting you to believe in Jesus Christ. Indeed, you make all of us who preach the gospel to be liars, and we are not so; neither do you think so badly of us when we speak in everyday life. We tell you glorious things, which we have tasted and handled, of the good word of God. We speak out of our experience of the power of Christ's blood, when we pray you to accept His atoning sacrifice, and yield yourselves to Him. We have no motive in persuading you to faith but that of love to your souls. We shall not be gainers by your conversion, or losers by your ruin, but we love you, and therefore pray you believe those necessary truths, without which you can never enter the kingdom of heaven.

These people next *did violence to Christ Himself and His precious blood*. It does seem amazing to those of us who love Jesus and worship Him that any should reject Him. He comes so tenderly, so meekly, the Lamb of God! All that He does is so generous, so self-denying, that we marvel that you refuse Him. "He takes away the sin of the world"; why does the world despise Him? What has He done that you should refuse to become His disciples and accept His salvation? Do you not know that you do despite to His blood? To me there is a great sanctity about the blood of man. I saw last Wednesday the Prayer Book which Bishop Juxon held in his hand as he stood by the side of Charles I on the scaffold at Whitehall. Two spots of blood are on the page wherein he was reading the prayers, as the axe fell upon the monarch's neck. I have no reverence for Charles I, but I have reverence for drops of blood. I looked at them, and they were no theme of jest for me; the blood of a man is sacred. But what shall I say of the blood of the Son of God! God Himself, incarnate, in some mysterious manner taking into union with Himself our humanity, and shedding His blood to redeem us! What is to be said of this? Look with reverence upon that precious blood. Can you think that this blood was shed to wash away sin, and yet trifle with it, and go your way to your farm and to your merchandise, forgetful altogether of this amazing sacrifice? God grant that you may not be guilty of the blood of Christ! It is an enormous guilt, and it lies on every unbeliever who has heard of Jesus, and has rejected His great salvation.

These people had *to do despite to all the marvels which lie wrapped up in the gospel*. To us, my dear hearers, who believe in Jesus, the gospel is the most wonderful thing that can ever be. The more we know of it, the more astounded we are at it. It is a compound of divine and infinite things. When we study it, we go from wonder to wonder. Here we behold the heart of God, and hear the voice of His infinite tenderness, His infallible wisdom, His stern justice, and His supreme beneficence. How can all this be rejected by you? Surely, you do not know what is in the gospel, or you would hearken to its every tone. I sat yesterday with two tubes in my ears to listen to sounds that came from revolving cylinders of wax. I heard music, though I knew that no instrument was near. It was music which had been caught up months before, and now was ringing out as clearly and distinctly in my ears as it could have done had I

been present at its first sound. I heard Mr. Edison speak; he repeated a childish ditty, and when he had finished he called upon his friends to repeat it with him, and I heard many American voices joining in that repetition. That wax cylinder was present when these sounds were made, and now it talked it all out in my ear. Then I heard Mr. Edison at work in his laboratory; he was driving nails, and working on metal, and doing all sorts of things, and calling for this and that with that American tone which made one know his nationality. I sat and listened, and I felt lost in the mystery. But what of all this? What can these instruments convey to us? But oh, to sit and listen to the gospel when your ears are really opened! Then you hear God Himself at work, you hear Jesus speak; you hear His voice in suffering and in glory, and you rise up and say, "I never thought to have heard such strange things! Where have I been to be so long deaf to this? How could I neglect a gospel in which are locked up such wondrous treasures of wisdom and knowledge, such measureless depths of love and grace?" In the gospel of the Lord Jesus, God speaks into the ear of His child more music than all the harps of heaven can yield. I pray you, do not despise it. Be not such dull, driven cattle that when God has set before you what angels desire to look into, you close your eyes to such glories, and pay attention to the miserable trifles of time and sense.

This rejection of the gospel of Christ is the more grievous because *it is a decided act of the will*. When a man refuses to be saved it is his own act and deed. Nothing in Scripture will support us in throwing the blame elsewhere. The devil himself cannot refuse Christ for a man; he must do *that* for himself. Only you can bolt the door against yourself. There is a will in man, and it is a sadly perverse will, so that the Savior said of it, "You will not come to Me, that you might have life." The not coming of which the Lord complains is a direct act of the man's own will. You choose to sin; you choose to remain uncleansed from guilt; you choose to abide under the wrath of God. You have deliberately chosen to be without Christ for years, and therein you are choosing your own destruction. This is a fearful thing. It made me feel, when I was preparing my discourse, as if I must spend all the time over this first head, for I cannot willingly leave a single soul to be of the number of whom it is written, "You put it from you." How can we bear to see you thus commit soul-suicide?

Notice! We have here the rejection of Christ regarded as *a man's own verdict upon himself*. No man can claim a fairer jury than to let his own faculties sit in judgment upon himself. Listen! "You judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life." This, then, is your own verdict, you who refuse the gospel. You have not yielded to Christ, and you are not saved, and thus you have "judged yourselves unworthy of everlasting life." In the legal sense there is no worthiness in any man. Our conscious unworthiness is our only worthiness for mercy, and that consciousness is worked in us by grace. But in looking the whole thing up and down, you have felt hitherto that you were not the men to believe in Christ, you were not the women to be saved. You felt rather that you were the kind of people who should spend your zeal in attending the theater or the dance. You felt that you best answered the end of your being when you did your daily labor, or opened your shop and saved a little money; but that you were not called upon to think of more high and heavenly things. You judged yourselves worthy to live a temporary life, and then, like beasts, to die and be no more; but an eternal destiny of glory and immortality you have not judged yourselves worthy to obtain. Remember, this is your own verdict upon yourself. If your verdict had run, "I am an immortal being, I shall outlive the sun and moon, and I would therefore be prepared for my supreme destiny, and I can only be so prepared by linking myself with the eternal Son of God, who, as the chief of men, shows us our manhood united to the Godhead, and gives those who are in Him to rejoice in God their Father," this would have led you to lofty aspirations. This conclusion you have not arrived at, but you have brought in the verdict, "unworthy of eternal life," which, being interpreted, means—worthy to die. I fear that your verdict will have to stand. How terrible will it be when the Lord will set His seal to your own judgment, and say, "You are unworthy of eternal life; this is your own judgment upon yourself. You were not willing to be quickened into spiritual life; you shall remain in eternal death"! It will be hell to a man to have his own voluntary choice confirmed and made unchangeable. Oh, that this judgment may not fall upon you! O sirs, I dread above all things that throughout eternity you will be left to your own free wills, to continue in that condition of alienation from God which you have chosen, reaping what you have sowed! If you deliberately prefer sin to Christ, and let go par-

don, everlasting life, and heaven, who is to blame? Will you not curse yourselves to all eternity? And will not this be hell?

Once more; this sad, this wretched putting from them of everlasting life, *greatly grieves the Spirit of God*. Paul and Barnabas were moved by it to speak in deep solemnity. In those godly men the Spirit of God largely dwelt, and in them He revealed His thoughts. They had come to Antioch in pure love to souls, and they had hoped better things of their countrymen than to see them reject the Savior. As an audience, they had been most attentive while Paul recited the history of Israel, and he and Barnabas hoped that many would have believed on the Son of David, and when they found that the frequenters of the synagogue had become envious and jealous because the Gentiles were so eager to hear the Word, then Paul and Barnabas were grievously wounded. The Spirit of God is much more tender than the soul of Paul or Barnabas, and He is sorely grieved when He sees Jesus rejected. It is His office to win for Jesus the love of men, and He is vexed when men turn their backs on the loving Lord. What must the Holy Spirit have to bear from the multitudes of men and women who are putting the gospel away from them! In no one case is it a trifle to Him, but in every instance He is grieved, even as of old it was written, "They rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit." O gracious Spirit of God, still bear with wayward men! We beseech You, still have pity upon the ungodly, for madness is in their hearts. Still enlighten their darkness, and melt the hardness of their hearts, for Jesus' sake.

There stands the case; they put everlasting life from them, and judged themselves unworthy of it. What an unhappy state of things! It is too painful for me. I cannot speak longer upon it; I must hasten to my second point.

II. THIS REJECTION OF CHRIST BY SOME LED TO A MORE EXTENDED EFFORT. When Paul and Barnabas found that their message was rejected, what did they do? They met the Jews with this bold sentence, "Seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

In consequence of the ill-manners of the Jews *they did not turn away from their work*. It never entered their minds to give up their ministry because it did not succeed among these Jews. They did not say, "Lo, we turn away from preaching Jesus; we will speak no more in the name of the Lord." Neither, my brethren, may we speak thus. I know the heart grows sick when tender testimony is rejected. The constant reiteration of the same gospel, to ears that will not hear, becomes wearisome work. It needs great faith to go on from day to day plowing a rock. Oh, shall we always have to cry to you in vain! Will you always be so perverse? Yet we dare not cease to plead with you. We cannot give you up. We overcome the suggestion of our weariness, "I will speak no more in the name of the Lord." For love of you, the gospel is as fire in our bones, and we cannot cease to warn every man, and plead with every man for Jesus.

Instead of turning from the work, these holy men *addressed themselves to those who had been somewhat neglected*, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Beloved, if you have been mainly laboring with the children of godly parents, and these refuse, turn to the slum children. If you have tried to bless respectable people, and they remain unsaved, try those who are not respectable. If those to whom it was natural and necessary that the word should first be spoken, have put it away from them, turn to those who have hitherto been left out in the cold. Take the Lord's hint in this apostolic history, and distinctly turn to those people who are not yet gospel hardened. Turn to those who have not been brought up under religious influences, but have been looked upon as without the circle. That, I believe, is the Lord's mind towards the church of today. Let her break up fresh soil, and she will have richer harvests. Let her open new mines, and she shall find rare riches. We too often preach within a little circle where the message of life has already been rejected scores of times. Let us not spend all our time in knocking at doors from which we have been repulsed, let us try elsewhere. During this new week, and throughout the rest of our lives, let us seek after the neglected, the utterly irreligious, the worldly and profane. Startle not; I mean just what I say. Let the infidel and the superstitious be the object of our prayers; let the frivolous and worldly be spoken with. This seems to me to be the parallel of Paul's conduct when he turned to the Gentiles, who were given up to idols and served different lusts, and were viewed as quite beyond the line of grace.

They enlarged the scope of their ministry under divine command. They said, "We turn to the Gentiles. For so has the Lord commanded us." Their change of aim was not a freak of fancy. If you now turn your chief thoughts to the most neglected part of the community, you will have this as your warrant, "So has the Lord commanded us." It was right to begin with chapel-goers, and church-goers, and those instructed in the faith; it was necessary to begin with the children of the godly, but if they put it from them, and count themselves unworthy of eternal life, it is now imperative upon us that we look after others. O my brethren, let us try to do so! Let us turn our energies towards getting in the people who are not familiar with the courts of the Lord's house, or with the gospel of His Son, for so has the Lord commanded us.

There is this happy, and yet unhappy, circumstance to urge us on—*the outsiders are by far the larger number.* What were the Jews in number as compared with the Gentiles? If you work for Christ among those who are in our religious circles, and fail to win them, the field is the world, and the larger part of that field has never been touched as yet. We have labored for London, but if London counts itself unworthy of eternal life, let us think of Calcutta, Canton, and the Congo. If these near ones will not reward our endeavors, let us be of enterprising spirit, and do as traders do, who, when they find no market at home, strike out new lines. This is precisely what the text would teach us. Let us launch out into the deep, and let down our nets for a draught. If we cannot catch fish in the shallows, great shoals of fish are in the deeps, and if we will launch out we shall come back with our boats loaded with the living freight.

The result of the rejection of Christ by some was the expansion of the sphere of the godly workers. It reminds us of the parable—they that were bidden were not worthy; therefore, go out into the highways and hedges, and as many as you find bid to the supper.

III. Thirdly, please notice that **THIS ENLARGEMENT OF EFFORT WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE PROMISE OF GOD.** "For so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set you to be a light of the Gentiles that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."

Let us notice this; *God has set Jesus to be a light, and a light He must be.* God's appointment is no empty thing. No man thinks of setting up a light if nobody will ever see it, and if God has appointed Christ to be a light, depend upon it some are to see that light. But all men are blind by nature. Alas! It is even so, but if God has set His Son to be a light, I conclude that He is about to open the eyes of the blind, that they may see this light. If I saw a wise man going into a blind asylum, laying on gas or making preparation for the electric light, I should feel sure that he had a view to people who can see, and if none but blind people could come into the building, I should conclude that he anticipated a time when the poor blind folks would find their eyes again, and would be able to use the light. So, as the Lord has set Jesus to be a light, you may be sure that He means to open blind eyes. Jesus will enlighten the people, souls will be saved. God has set His King upon the holy hill of Zion, and He has not set Him there for a King without intending to give Him a kingdom. God will not allow His Son to be a Savior who never saves, a Redeemer who does not redeem.

Our Lord is *set to enlighten every class.* The Jew no longer has a monopoly on the light of heaven. God has not appointed His Son to save a few dozen people who go to a particular meeting house. He has set Him to be a light to the nations, and He means He shall be so. This encourages us to labor among all classes. Jesus is a fit light for the upper ten thousand, and some of them shall rejoice in that light; He is equally set to be a light to the teeming millions, and they shall rejoice in Him, too. What God has appointed must be carried out. Jesus is yet to be a light to outcast people—to the persons of whom we have never thought favorably, the classes whom even philanthropy has felt ready to abandon. This is God's set purpose concerning His Son Jesus, and His omnipotence will carry it out.

We are further told that *our Lord Jesus is set to be salvation.* Be you therefore sure that He will save. If Jesus is set for salvation, men shall be saved. Let us believe in Christ's power to save. We have only a spattering of faith in Him. Why do you not talk of Jesus to that fellow who swears in the street? You say that it would be of no use. What is this but distrust of the gospel? Why do you not test the power of the glad tidings upon persons of bad character? Is it not that you think the gospel would be of no use in such a case? You think that some quarters of the town cannot be reached by the truth, thus you have a local

Christianity—a God of the hills and not of the valleys—a religion in which the power varies according to longitude and latitude. God forgive our unbelief, and at the same time kill it!

The great Father has set Christ Jesus to be “*salvation unto the ends of the earth.*” So then, if any are further off than others, they are especially included. If any seem so far gone that they stand on the verge of creation, out of the reach of civilization and charity—these are the people whom Jesus is set to save. He can save to both ends of the earth, and all that lies in between. To the most debauched, depraved, drunken, and desperate, Jesus is set to be salvation. From that poverty which has been brought on by vice, and that degradation which is the consequence of sin, Jesus can uplift mankind. Where even the image of manhood seems obliterated, and the brute reigns supreme, the Lord Jesus can set the superscription of God. To the lost, Jesus is set to be a Savior. The triumphs of the gospel at the first were largely among the lowest of the low. Slaves and outcasts embraced Christianity, and rose to holiness. It was by such that the Lord overthrew the idols of Greece and Rome. The Lord can work such wonders again, and He will. Only let us believe it, and tell out unceasingly the gospel of Jesus in the unlikeliest places, and the promise will be fulfilled—“I have set you to be a light of the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.”

IV. Observe, in the fourth place, that THIS ENLARGEMENT OF EFFORT WAS ENCOURAGED BY SPEEDY SUCCESS, “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.”

First, *the Gentiles were glad.* Could you not see their eyes sparkle as they learned that Jesus was their salvation? They sat in the synagogue, where they were only tolerated, the Jews looking very jealously at them, but now they heard good news, for the living God had thought of them and sent to them salvation. No more would they care for the dark eyes of the Jews; they smiled as they saw the door of grace set open before them. Paul and Barnabas must have felt glad to address so glad a congregation. We little guess with what joy the message of mercy would be received by those who had never yet heard it. Go, and see what it will do. How I should like a congregation of people who have never heard of Jesus Christ before! I should expect to have a blazing time of it, like the man who set light to a straw stack, and found that he had a world of fire before him in no time. To hear of salvation by the blood of Jesus for the first time must be a sensation indeed! As for many of my hearers, they have heard of Jesus so long that the topic is stale. I feel you will never accept the Savior, but will die in your sins. Those who have never heard of Jesus at all, often hear the gospel with great interest, and believe unto eternal life.

The Gentiles accepted the word. They did not sit down and quibble and raise questions, and so forth, but it is written, “they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord.” This is more than many ministers do. Look at our divines now! What are they doing? They are not glorifying the Word of God, but taking the glory from it. According to some of them the Word of God in His Book is full of blunders; how much less trustworthy must it be as it is preached! The shepherds are now destroying the pastures. Holy Scripture, according to them, is not infallible. The sure word of testimony is no longer sure, according to modern ideas. With these I have no fellowship. O my soul, come not into their secret! Let us loathe such dishonoring of the Word of God. Let us get far away from all pretense of communion with these enemies of our faith.

Get among the poor, the lowly, the sinful. Tell them the glad news of pardon bought with blood. I warrant you, they will not turn critics, and quibble and find fault, but they will, many of them, believe unto eternal life. The man who has grown accustomed to luxuries is the man who turns his meat over, and picks off a bit here, and a bit there, for this is too fat, and that is too gristly. Bring in the poor wretches who are half-starved. Fetch in a company of laborers who have been waiting all day at the docks, and have found no work, and in consequence have received no wage. Set them down to a joint of meat. It vanishes before them. See what masters they are of the art of knife and fork! They find no fault; they never dream of such a thing. If the meat had been a little coarse, it would not have mattered to them; their need is too great for them to be dainty. Oh, for a host of hungry souls! How pleasant to feed them! How different from the task of persuading the satiated Pharisees to partake of the gospel! Go for them, Beloved! Lay yourselves out to reach poor, needy souls. They will come to Jesus, though the self-

righteous will not. A great success awaits those who will again “turn to the Gentiles.” Oh, for such a turning on the part of all who love the gospel of free grace!

V. I finish with the fifth point. THIS ENLARGEMENT, AND ALL ITS BLESSED RESULTS, WERE ORDAINED IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD. The record runs thus—“They were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” Attempts have been made to prove that these words do not preach predestination, but these attempts so clearly do violence to language that I will not waste time in answering them. A great discussion has been carried on between those who believe in the free will of man, and others who believe in the free grace of God. There is no real reason for this dispute, except when the man who believes in free will denies God’s freedom in grace, or when the man who magnifies free grace denies that man has any will. It is possible for both parties to be wrong, and, in a measure, for both to be right. Beloved, I used the first part of my text fairly, and I was not afraid to acknowledge the existence of free will, and to deplore its doings. Now I read, “as many as were ordained to eternal life believed,” and I shall not twist the text, but I shall glorify the grace of God by ascribing to it every man’s faith. Those who believed in Jesus believed in Him because they were ordained unto eternal life. I will not bate a jot of what I believe to be the truth on either side of a debate. From the word of God I gather that damnation is all of man, from top to bottom, and salvation is all of grace, from first to last. He that perishes chooses to perish, but he that is saved is saved because God has chosen to save him. Though some cannot make these statements agree, they are nevertheless equally true—“You have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help found.”

We believe that *the Lord knows them that are His, and knows them before they are openly manifested*, so that He says of a certain place, “I have much people in this city.” Do you think that the Lord does not foreknow? How, then, can He prophesy? If God foresees a certain thing is to be, why, then, it must be, and has not this all the fixity of predestination? Moreover, “whom He did foreknow, He did predestinate.” Is it not God that gives the disposition to believe? If men are disposed to have eternal life, does not He in every case dispose them? Is it wrong for God to give grace? If it is right for Him to give it, is it wrong for Him to purpose to give it? Would you have Him give it by accident? If it is right for Him to purpose to give grace today, it was right for Him to have purposed it before this date. He is a God that changes not, and what He performs today is not the purpose of today, but the purpose of all eternity, “For known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.” God knows and God appoints those who shall believe and be saved.

But please note this fact; *God can effect His purpose with man without violating his will*. He can leave man a man, with full use of his faculties, and yet turn his mind as He pleases. The will is never more free than in conversion, and yet it is never more under subjection to divine power. I do not know how the Lord governs the will; if I did know, I should be God. God does not new-create men as a baker makes loaves of bread, or a potter makes vessels, by manual skill and force. No, He treats men as men; He deals with free agents as free agents, and yet He has as much power over them as the baker over the dough or the potter over the clay. His supreme will acts omnipotently, and yet works with a holy delicacy which never violates the attributes of the mind. He makes men as much free agents in repentance, faith, and holiness, as they were when they ran greedily into sin. He makes His people willing in the day of His power, and thus glorifies His wisdom, His power, and His love. God has a purpose to save those whom He gave to His Son Jesus, and all these must come to Jesus for that salvation. I want you to believe this when you are at work for your Lord. When I have come into this pulpit on a Thursday night, I have thought, “It is very wet, and I shall not have many people,” but I have said to my friends in the vestry, “We shall have a picked congregation; God will send those whom He means to bless.” I do not come here and preach at chance. What is to be done, by preaching the gospel, is determined from before all time and it will be accomplished. If I were dependent upon the will of my hearers, and there were no supreme power over their wills, I should preach with a faint heart, but he that preaches the gospel with omnipotence at the back of him has a blessed and fruitful service.

Is not this cheering for the preacher? We shall not labor in vain, nor spend our strength for nothing. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the gospel shall not fail. Men may rage against the gospel, and think to defeat its purpose, but the counsel of the Lord shall stand. All that the Lord intended in creation,

and in providence, and in grace, will be assuredly accomplished to the last jot and tittle. In the kingdom of grace there shall be nothing to mar the glory of the Lord's triumph when the record has been fully written.

This is a great comfort to the worker. Let him be always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as his labor is not in vain in the Lord. Bowed to the earth with horror at the guilt involved in the willful rejection of the Lord Jesus by our hearers, we nevertheless triumph in the firm conviction that God, who sends us, will go with us, and that His purpose shall stand. We believe in the sovereignty of God, not only in His right to do as He wills with His own grace but also in His power to do so.

Our text is equally full of *comfort to the obedient hearer*, for if you believe, it follows that you are ordained unto eternal life. If you believe the gospel of truth; if you believe in the divine sense of trusting the Lord Jesus Christ; if you cast your guilty souls on Jesus, and look to Him as lifted up, even as the brazen serpent was lifted in the wilderness, you are ordained unto eternal life. Trouble not yourself about election, but rather encourage yourself with it. This is sure evidence of your election, that you believe in Jesus, for "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." If you believe, you are ordained to possess on earth the holy life which temptation cannot destroy, and to enjoy forever that heavenly life which eternity will not exhaust. Faith gives you a life in Christ, which can no more die than the eternal Lord on whom it rests. Oh, that the sweet constraint of almighty love may lead trembling souls to trust Jesus at once, and live forever!

I wish especially to speak to any here present who are not familiar with the gospel. I speak to rank outsiders, to people who know nothing of these things. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"—saved at once. "But I never go to a place of worship." I mean exactly you, my friend. "But I have been a swearer." I am thinking of the blasphemer. "But I have been an awful drunkard." To you I speak this gospel. "Alas!" cries one, "I shrink from your eye. I crept in here this morning, but I am a daughter of shame." I say to you, even to you—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." You are aimed at in the mission of Jesus. Trust Him, and you are saved. "But I have been violent against the gospel." You are the very man that I am especially looking for. I prayed for you before I came to this place, for I prayed that Saul of Tarsus might this day become Paul the apostle. I long to win, by this sermon, some outrageous enemy of God, that he may become a fervent friend of Jesus. You are as black as a crow, and almost as bad as the devil, therefore I long to see you converted at once, to become henceforth a leader in the church of God. Oh, for a batch of great saints made out of great sinners! Oh, that your energy, now used to fight against God, may be subdued by sovereign grace and employed in defending and spreading the gospel of Jesus! Shall it be so, my friend? Oh, that some woman that is a sinner would come and wash our Lord's feet with tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head! Come, you with long hair, unbind your tresses, and honor them by this service. If they have been a net in which to entangle precious lives, make them a towel for your Savior's feet. Come, sinners, come to Him who loves you! Bring them, O Lord! Hear us, O Jehovah, as we entreat You to save them by the blood of Your Beloved Son! Hear us now, we beseech You, and save myriads! Amen, and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 13:14-52.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—910, 956, 486.

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